

IN HIS NAME & BY THE REMEMBRANCE OF HIS LAST HUUJAT (ATFS)

GHADEER LECTURE SERIES

Lecture 7: QURANIC VERSES ON IMAMAT

VERSE OF TABLEEGH

Part 1: Apparent meaning of the verse

In the beginning of the discussion, we will study the Verse of Tableegh which is the third verse in our series of Quranic verses on Imamah. In Surah Maidah, which is a 'Madani' surah, in the 67th verse, Allah addresses His Messenger and says

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

"O Apostle! Convey what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message, and Allah will protect you from the people; surely Allah will not guide the unbelieving people¹

This verse is famous as the '**Verse of Tableegh**'. Our discussion in this verse, vis-à-vis Imamah will be in three parts

- Discussion on the words and terms of the verse
- Context of this verse
- Discussion of the Ahle Sunnah about the verse

Part 1: Meaning of the words used in the verse

1. The beginning part of the verse is addressed to Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) but it does not say يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ (O Prophet!). Allah has addressed Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) in many verses as "O Prophet" But in this verse Allah has addressed Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) as "Rasool" (Messenger) since he (sawa) was made responsible by Allah to convey His 'message' to the people. Means the verse says, 'O Messenger, you are

¹ Surah Maidah, v 67

responsible to convey the message' The use of the imperative tense "Convey" along with "O Messenger" indicates that conveying the 'message' was obligatory upon Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a).

2. What should he convey? Whatever the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) has been made responsible to convey to the people is not related to his personal views and opinions. We believe that Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) never conveys his individual views to the people. We believe that Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) is 'infallible' and whatever he says will be from the side of Allah. Yet this verse categorically states 'whatever has been revealed to you by your Lord, convey to the people' Hence, this is a divine message and responsibility.
3. *'If you don't convey this message to the people, then you have not fulfilled any of your prophetic responsibilities'* It is worth noting that only in this verse Allah has used such a threatening tone with His Messenger – 'if you don't convey this message then all your past efforts will be null and void' Hence, both 'order' and 'threat' is noticeable only in this verse.

In the six thousand verses of Holy Quran, Allah has not used such a threatening tone with Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a). Nowhere He has said that 'if you don't convey about Tauheed or Qiyamat or Paradise or Hell or Salat or Ahkam or you don't warn the polythiests' then you have not fulfilled your prophetic responsibilities. Nowhere Allah has said like this.

Then which is this all-important issue that in front of it, the 23 years of Prophethood of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) is at stake? This is the most important aspect of this verse.

It is important to note that Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) was the greatest prophet, the best creation of Allah and the most obedient of His servants. He never showed an iota of laxity in fulfilling his prophetic responsibilities of Tableegh and was always prompt in conveying Allah's message to the people.

About other people who propagate the religion, Allah says in the Holy Quran

الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا

“Those who propagate the message of Allah, they fear only Him and no one else other than Allah. And Allah is sufficient to take the account.”²

When the ‘those who propagate the religion’ (muballegeen) have been described in such a manner in the Holy Quran, then is it right to think anything else about Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a)? Would ‘threat’ and ‘order’ be required for Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a)?

It should not be assumed, by seeing the threat and order in this verse, that Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) – god forbid – was having some reservations about this verse and Allah had to ‘order’ him not to delay any further and convey the message immediately. Never. Rather, Allah wanted to show the importance and significance of this message to the people. Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) was so much obedient to Allah that he was surely going to do this work. And he was not in need on any threat or warning.

It is like a teacher who tells the first student in the class that ‘if don’t’ complete this homework, then don’t come to class tomorrow. By this emphasis and threat, the teacher wants to show the importance of this work to all the remaining students of the class.

Here too Allah is introducing the importance of this task to the Muslim nation. It is so important, that Allah has ordered His Messenger to fulfil this work and has warned him of the consequences in case he forgets to convey the message.

The point that will complete the discussion is that what is the interpretation of ‘prophethood’ in this verse? ‘If you don’t convey, then you have not fulfilled any work of your **prophethood...**’ Does it imply ‘part of prophethood’ (*Juzee*)? Or ‘entire prophethood (*kulli*)?’

² Surah Ahzab, v 39

If we assume the first meaning, that is 'juzee' then the verse will be read as 'If you don't convey this message, then you have not conveyed this message'. This becomes a repetition and is against the literary perfections of Quran.

Hence, great scholars and litterateurs have said that over here 'juzee' prophethood is not implied. Rather, the second meaning of 'entire' (kulli) prophethood is more appropriate in this verse. Hence, 'if you don't convey this message, then your **entire prophethood** will be in doubt' In other words, 'O Messenger! Conveying this message is equal to your entire prophethood'

4. "*Allah shall protect you from the people*" The word "people" sometimes in Quran is used in a positive sense – like it means 'common people' or 'believers' But sometimes, it is also used in the negative sense – like it means 'polytheists' 'hypocrites' and 'opponents'

Eg. In surah Aale Imran, v 173 Allah says

الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا

"Those to whom the people said: Surely men have gathered against you, therefore fear them, but this increased their faith"³

In the above verse, the word 'people' has been used in the negative sense. The first 'people' implies the hypocrites and the second 'people' implies the polytheists.

In the verse under discussion, the word 'people' is used in the negative sense. Because Quran says '*And Allah shall protect you from the people*' Thus, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) was fearing something. But it was not related to his self or his life. Rather, his fear was about the message that he was about to convey. Whether it will create problems for religion? Won't it create discord among the people? Won't it create a ruckus and commotion in the people? This verse indicates that at that time there were people who would oppose this message and Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) was afraid of their opposition. Won't they create difficulties and obstacles

³ Surah Aale Imran, v 173

for other Muslims? Then, Allah has assured His prophet not to fear such people. These people will not be successful in opposing the message. Allah will protect you. He will keep away their evil from you

5. *“Allah shall not guide the deniers (kafirs)”* It is important to note that the word ‘kafir’ does not mean ‘polytheists’ in the above verse. Rather, it means *‘those who will deny the message’* of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) that he was supposed to convey. Allah has branded them as ‘kafir’. It means that those who do not accept and submit to the message of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a) are ‘kafirs’ and Allah shall never guide such people